

Defense, Intelligence & Homeland Security

In this section:

- War in Iraq
- Prisoner's Rights
- Intelligence and Terrorism
- Homeland Security
- First Responders

War in Iraq

In October 2002, Rep. Eshoo voted against the President's war resolution when it came before the Congress because of serious concerns about his policies of preemption and unilateralism. Going into war without the approval and support of the international community, and without a plan for the post-war occupation period, has resulted in a country less secure now than at the end of major combat operations.

Since the Iraq war began, Rep. Eshoo has witnessed how the Administration's lack of planning and policy of pre-emptive war has affected this nation and this world. In March of 2005, she visited Iraq as a member of a bipartisan congressional delegation. This was her second trip to Iraq since the war began, and she noted that the most significant difference between this trip and her first trip in May of 2003 was how much more dangerous it had become. In the aftermath of the invasion, the Administration disbanded the Iraqi security force and the professional police force. As a result, the insurgents have terrorized the country, hobbled reconstruction efforts, and caused death and destruction.

Rep. Eshoo has consistently called for the internationalization of the effort in Iraq and for training Iraqis so they can assume responsibility for the security of their country. Her priority has been to ensure that American soldiers receive everything they need to complete their mission safely and come home as soon as possible. She has also been deeply concerned about the Administration's overall strategy in Iraq because the U.S. is bearing almost the entire cost of the war without the proper accountability for tax dollars being spent in Iraq.

Due to the gross mismanagement and a stunning lack of oversight in Iraq, in October of 2005 the Government Accountability Office (GAO) concluded, "...neither the Department of Defense nor Congress can reliably know how much the war is costing or details on how appropriated funds are being spent." [Read the GAO report.]. The best estimates indicate we're now spending close to \$1 billion a day.

Rep. Eshoo believes that this level of spending and the ongoing strain on our military is unsustainable. She believes that it's time to begin turning Iraq over to the Iraqis by developing a plan for the withdrawal of U.S. forces. She's a cosponsor

of H.J.Res. 55, 'Homeward Bound' -- the Withdrawal of United States Armed Forces From Iraq Resolution of 2005. This legislation declares that it is U.S. policy to announce a plan, not later than December 31, 2005, for the withdrawal of all U.S. Armed Forces from Iraq and turn over all military operations in Iraq at the earliest possible date to the elected government of Iraq. This bi-partisan resolution calls for policymakers to begin putting their best effort toward developing the best strategy possible.

Since the introduction of this legislation, the President has responded by releasing his National Plan for Victory in Iraq, which Rep. Eshoo hopes will lead to hearings in Congress and a legitimate, open debate about our goals in Iraq and how best to relieve the burden on the military and the American taxpayer.

Related documents:

- Rep. Murtha's resolution to redeploy forces from Iraq
- Rep. Eshoo's statement in support of Rep. Murtha's resolution to redeploy forces from Iraq

Prisoner's Rights

Since the abuses of Iraqi prisoners first came to light in May 2004, Rep. Eshoo has called for extensive investigations into the prison abuses in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay. She signed a letter to Secretary Rumsfeld demanding an immediate and thorough investigation into the actions taken by military personnel by the Department of Defense Inspector General, and she signed a letter to Attorney General Ashcroft insisting that any private contractors involved in these abuses be investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent possible. Rep. Eshoo also publicly called on Secretary Rumsfeld to resign because of his responsibility for this failure and others.

Requests for a full open inquiry and public hearing have been rebuffed by the Republicans in the House and the Administration has withheld from Congress important information about the treatment of prisoners in U.S. custody. Because of the magnitude of the Abu Ghraib scandal and other detainee abuses and the enormous ramifications for our effort in Iraq and the safety of our troops, Rep. Eshoo believes we should undertake a formal, public investigation.

Rep. Eshoo is a cosponsor of H.R. 3003, legislation to establish an Independent Commission to conduct a bipartisan investigation of prisoner abuse in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay. Under our system of checks and balances, the House of Representatives has a constitutional duty to perform proper oversight, and this legislation would see to it that this responsibility is carried out.

Rep. Eshoo is also a cosponsor of H.R. 3985, the Interrogation Procedures Act. This legislation is identical to Senator John McCain's anti-torture amendment, which was overwhelmingly adopted by the Senate as part of the Fiscal Year 2006 Senate Department of Defense Appropriations bill. The amendment prohibits any agency of the U.S. government, including the CIA and other intelligence agencies, from engaging in cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of detainees, regardless of where they're held. It also requires that the Department of Defense (DOD) enforce the rules and

regulations of the Army Field Manual on Interrogations when conducting interrogations of any prisoner within DOD custody. This manual sets forth the basic principles of interrogation doctrine and stipulates that all techniques and procedures are to be used in accordance with international law, including, most importantly, the Geneva Conventions.

The Interrogation Procedures Act has broad, bipartisan support and has been endorsed by 29 retired military officials, including former Secretary of State Colin Powell, as well as a number of human rights groups. It has been referred to the House Armed Services Committee and to the House Judiciary Committee, and Rep. Eshoo will continue to do everything she can to see that it's passed into law.

Intelligence and Terrorism

Since January 2003, Rep. Eshoo has had the privilege of serving on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, a position that has given her a unique perspective on the critical issues facing our intelligence community, and the challenges posed by the global fight against terrorism.

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, Rep. Eshoo has been an ardent supporter of every effort to investigate the security failures prior to the 9/11 attacks, and apply that understanding toward reforming the Intelligence Community to better protect us against terrorism.

Rep. Eshoo been highly critical of the efforts of the Bush Administration to create a link between the 9/11 attacks and Saddam Hussein, and the ways in which pre-war intelligence was manipulated or "hyped" to sensationalize the threat posed by Hussein's regime and the push to war in Iraq.

In November 2005, Rep. Eshoo renewed her call for the Intelligence Committee and Congress to conduct a serious, focused, and comprehensive review of questions concerning the quality and objectivity of pre-war intelligence relating to Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and Iraqi ties to terrorism. Despite the President's claims to the contrary, there has never been a full investigation of pre-war intelligence efforts and the allegations that intelligence was manipulated to support the Administration's call for war. Thus far, the appeals to conduct investigations into prewar abuses have twice been rejected along party lines in the House Intelligence Committee.

Congress has a duty to conduct investigation and oversight on behalf of the American people and has failed to do so. Since 9/11 Rep. Eshoo and many of her colleagues have sought investigation on everything from the lack of weapons of mass destruction, pre-war intelligence, prisoner abuse at military prisons, the intentional leak of a covert CIA operative's identity, and a strategy for troop withdrawal.

The House Leadership has blocked investigations every step of the way, just as they did before the 9/11 Commission. It was only through the courageous and tireless effort by the families of the 9/11 victims that enough pressure was brought to bear to force a thorough, nonpartisan investigation by the 9/11 Commission, which was charged to "make a full and complete accounting of the circumstances surrounding the attacks, and the extent of the United States' preparedness for, and immediate response to, the attacks."

Rep. Eshoo was a strong supporter of the 9/11 Commission's inquiry, and she believes the American people owe a great deal to the work of the 9/11 Commission. Its bipartisan, unanimous report on the investigation of the attack on our country was thorough, it identified failures in our national security, and it recommended necessary reforms. As a member of the House Intelligence Committee, reforming the Intelligence Community has been a top priority of Rep. Eshoo's, and she's proud to have worked with her colleagues on the Committee to address the tragic shortcomings in our nation's intelligence infrastructure which the Commission exposed. She's very pleased that the House and Senate were able to reach a compromise and pass landmark legislation to reorganize the intelligence community to better protect our nation from terrorism. Rep. Eshoo voted for S. 2845, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, which became law in December of 2004.

Related documents:

- Rep. Eshoo's op-ed on the Intelligence Reform bill
- The 9-11 Commission's Report

Homeland Security

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, Rep. Eshoo became a cosponsor of H.R. 4660, the National Homeland Security and Combating Terrorism Act of 2002. This bill directly addressed the issue of our nation's security by establishing a Department of National Homeland Security with a primary mission of protecting our country. It also developed specific policies and plans to combat the threat of terrorism. The Department has the responsibility of coordinating border security and, most importantly, the Department unifies the multiple agencies that oversee some portion of our homeland defense. Through this critical coordination, the federal government, local governments, and the intelligence community could effectively work together to manage the threat of terrorism facing our country.

Instead of voting on H.R. 4660, however, the House initially voted on H.R. 5005, the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which passed the House by a vote of 295 to 132 on July 26, 2002. Rep. Eshoo had significant concerns about this bill. Instead of increasing our safety on planes and in airports, the bill pushed back the deadline for airports to screen all baggage. It also had very limited protections for existing federal employees who will be part of the new department, and placed irresponsible limits on liability for anti-terrorism products. Because of these serious flaws, Rep. Eshoo voted against this bill.

In response to my concerns, and the concerns of many other legislators, the House and Senate worked to develop compromise legislation that creates a more balanced Department of Homeland Security. Rep. Eshoo voted for H.R. 5710, the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which was passed by the House on November 13, 2002. Language included in this compromise bill addressed the many concerns Rep. Eshoo had with the original House-passed bill. She maintained that our country needed an agency to deal solely with the threat of terrorist attacks, which could protect our citizens from such events. Rep. Eshoo believes this legislation creates such an agency and does so in a responsible manner.

First Responders

Since the creation of the Department of Homeland Security Rep. Eshoo has worked exhaustively with the region's first responders to ensure that communities in and around California's 14th Congressional District are receiving their full share of federal support for security and preparedness needs. They have secured hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal aid through DHS grants, and Rep. Eshoo has written numerous letters to Secretary Ridge and others addressing the urgent needs of the community's heroic public safety personnel. Rep. Eshoo believes the community's first responders are among the very best in the nation, and it's an honor to partner with them for the good of the community.

Rep. Eshoo was thrilled when Congress passed her legislation in December of 2004, the ENHANCE-911 Act, which she had been working on for over a decade. This new law provides emergency call centers with funding to obtain the technology needed to locate mobile phone callers when they call into 911. Today, less than 60 percent of call centers have this capability, yet one-third of all calls to 911 are made from mobile phones. This legislation will go a long way to ensure this life-saving technology is widely available, particularly in rural areas.

While individual citizens should take steps to prepare for such unfortunate events, government and community organizations are also working daily to prepare and respond. Rep. Eshoo is very proud of local first responders and the relief organizations in our community who have taken up this charge. In Washington, she's been working hard to support these efforts and to bolster the resources available to help us better prepare and respond to a crisis.